

Minutes of the Regular Agenda Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the City of South Tucson, Arizona, held Tuesday, January 3, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., at the City of South Tucson Council Chambers, 1601 S. 6th Avenue, South Tucson, Arizona.

Staff Present: Veronica Moreno, Interim City Manager
 Lourdes Aguirre, Finance Director
 Danny Denogean, Public Safety Director and Chief of Police
 Betty Villegas, Housing Authority Director

Councilors Present: Mayor Paul Diaz
 Vice Mayor Herman Lopez
 Acting Mayor Rita Rogers
 Councilor Anita Romero (Excused)
 Councilor Cesar Aguirre
 Councilor Brian Flagg
 Councilor Roxanna Valenzuela

Others Present: Grace Beltran, Resident

Mayor Diaz called the Regular Agenda Meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, and Land Acknowledgment and Mission Statements.

ITEM #03 – LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND MISSION STATEMENT

Vice Mayor Lopez: On behalf of South Tucson residents, we honor the Tribal Nations who have served as caretakers of this land from time immemorial and respectfully acknowledge the ancestral homelands of the Tohono O’odham Nation and the multi-millennial presence of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe within South Tucson. Consistent with the City of South Tucson’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, we strive toward building equal-partner relationships with Arizona’s Tribal Nations.

Acting Mayor Rogers: The Mission of the City of South Tucson is to build up this community through mutual cooperation between we, the public servants, and you the citizens so that jointly we can build a safer and stronger City.

ITEM #04 – ROLL CALL

Mayor Diaz:
Councilor Valenzuela. Here
Councilor Aguirre. Here.
Councilor Flagg. Yes.
Vice Mayor Lopez. Here.
Acting Mayor Rita Rogers. Here.
Mayor Diaz: And I’m here, Paul Diaz, Mayor, here.

ITEM #05 – APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Diaz: None available.

Call to the Public

Mayor Diaz: If anybody in the public care to address the Council, now is the time, please.

Ms. Aguirre: Mr. Mayor, there was one card filled out, and the speaker is Ms. Grace Beltran, her address is 220 E. 39th Street, the topic is Fire Department. She is a resident.

Mayor Diaz: Ok, thank you.

Ms. Beltran: Good evening, Mayor, Council. It's good to be back. I was in a class first semester, and I don't have class on Tuesdays, so I'm back. After learning of the possible elimination of our Fire Department on the news the residents of South Tucson began expressing their worry. One area that people don't like anyone to mess with is our Public Service. I have listened to concerns this last week and I want to ask Council, especially newly elected Council, to please keep our Fire Department and build from it. We have the finances to fund Department and in meetings with the residents we would like our City Finance to be more transparent. If our City personnel says we don't have the money, then show us. We do not want our Fire to be outsourced or eliminated. Safety and care of our residents is our main concern and I ask Council and City personnel to work collaboratively with one another. It is time to sit down and work together to keep our City safe. A good leader, City Manager, Director, Council, whatever leader position anybody holds, it's beyond personal feelings that guide decision-making and to remember that you yourself are public service. Your job is to better our community, not take away its resources. I listened to the last Council meeting Minutes today and it does not make sense to exclude a leader from internal meetings. Allow Capt. Luna and all area leaders to be present at all meetings. He is part of the team, for goodness' sake. Set your personal feelings aside and work together to better our community. It is decisions like this that makes residents not believe in people whose tax monies pay salaries for. Get along please, collaborate and work for the people who deserve your service. Thank you and I truly hope we can work together as a community in a collaborative to keep our Fire Department.

Acting Mayor Rogers: Thank you.

Mayor Diaz: Thank you for coming. Do we have any more cards?

Ms. Aguirre: No, that was the only card.

Mayor Diaz: Thank you. Item #06.

ITEM #06 - MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBERS: REPORTS OF CURRENT EVENTS; FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Diaz: Any reports from Council?

Vice Mayor Lopez: Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Diaz: Ok.

Vice Mayor Lopez: I have a future agenda item that I will have Mr. Daniel Torres come in on our next meeting and he would like to present his basketball tournament that he is having at the House of Neighborly Service on February 5th. Hopefully we can recruit a lot of our neighborhood kids that participate in this tournament, and it goes from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the House of Neighborly Service. And the ages are from 9 to 13 so we don't have grown-ups playing against little children. That's all I have, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Diaz: Ok, thank you.

Acting Mayor Rogers: Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, did you say February 5th?

Vice Mayor Lopez: Yes, I did.

Acting Mayor Rogers: Ok, thank you.

Mayor Diaz: I do have a comment in regard to, I received an email from Mr. and Mrs. Beltran and I'd like to go ahead and refer that to the proper Department and also to acknowledge their email from them and that we will work on the 39th Street lighting issue that they have, but thank you.

ITEM #07 - CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENT HEADS: REPORTS TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Ms. Moreno: Yes, good evening, Mayor and Members of the Council. Happy New Year. Mayor and Council gave us direction at the last meeting to explore options to change the Fire Department. So we are looking at those options and will be coming back to our Council with a comprehensive, in-depth look at what the potential options are. I know that Mayor Diaz had made mention at the last meeting to look into an increase of property taxes so we will look into the implementation and process for that. Also you mentioned the increase of retail taxes so we will look at what the costs associated with retail taxes would look like, and also the implementation of a Fire District. So we will look at those three and other options that the City would be able to look at as far as just the issue as it pertains to the Fire Department. So, as I mentioned, we will be working on coming back with a comprehensive breakdown. I also want to report to Mayor and Council, I'm sure all of you have probably heard by now, unfortunately, Pico de Gallo which is a local restaurant was hit over the Holiday weekend, I believe it was Christmas Eve, so they are unfortunately closed for business. However, we did meet with them today and we told them we are, we want to work with them to make sure there is no interruption in their business. So they are working on a way to either have temporary occupancy on the building so they can open up the kitchen or looking at an option of having a food cart. That's in the works right now so if you hear anything, I know they put out there on social media that they are raising money for, I think they have had a really positive outpour throughout the community. So on behalf of them, they told me to thank Mayor and Council. Along those lines at the last meeting we also heard concerns from a local business owner, Mr. Don Lashley. I'm meeting with him tomorrow. So I'll get Mayor and Council caught up on those discussions tomorrow. So that finishes my report and then I do have a report from Housing Director Betty Villegas.

Councilor Flagg: So I do have a question. When you said there were three things you were looking into to fund Fire, when you said income property taxes, is that the secondary property tax?

Ms. Moreno: Well if I may, Mayor, Councilor Brian Flagg, these are going to be part of what the City Council asked, Mayor Diaz asked that we dig into.

Councilor Flagg: Yeah.

Ms. Moreno: This was his option for us to look into.

Councilor Flagg: Right.

Ms. Moreno: One was the increase in property tax and implementation so we will look at what the cost would entail. That would obviously be an increase to the current property tax and as of right now I do know it is about measure, so we will look at the implementation and what the costs are associated with it.

Councilor Flagg: Right, ok.

Ms. Moreno: So to answer your question, yes.

Councilor Flagg: Yeah.

Mayor Diaz: Thank you. Councilor Aguirre.

Councilor Aguirre: Yeah, I just know that, so in preparing this report to us, I think it might not be possible to get it on the next agenda but also to just think about doing, having you all do a presentation on our budget moving forward in the future I'm just kind of addressing some of the concerns here so here to the audience.

Ms. Moreno: Yes, Mayor and Councilor Aguirre, we do plan to have a, we typically prefer when we work on the budget, so that's forthcoming here, as Lourdes will do that, together on the same agenda.

Councilor Aguirre: Thank you.

Mayor Diaz: Any more questions? No?

Ms. Moreno: Let's go to Betty.

Mayor Diaz: Ok.

Ms. Villegas: This will be very, very brief. Good evening, Mayor and Council. I just wanted to let you know that I understand that there's a very high possibility that after tonight we may have an attorney and as you know, I have a couple of items on the Housing Authority agenda that have to be addressed immediately. So I'm hoping that after this that we can schedule a meeting for the Housing, for you as the Housing Commissioners, either this week or early next week. So if you can keep that in mind, I just wanted to let you know that this business is really important to get units back online so that people can move into them, ok. So that's really all I have, thank you. I hope you all have a Happy New Year and I wanted to publicly wish Acting Mayor Rita Rogers a Happy Birthday today.

Councilor Flagg: Yeah, right on, Happy Birthday.

Mayor Diaz: Happy Birthday.

Acting Mayor Rogers: Thank you.

Mayor Diaz: Thank you.

Ms. Villegas: Thank you.

Mayor Diaz: Item #08 is the Executive Session, so I'd like to get a Motion to recess Regular Meeting and convene into Executive Session.

Vice Mayor Lopez: So moved.

Acting Mayor Rogers: Second.

Mayor Diaz: We have a Second. All in favor, signify by saying Aye.

Council Members: Unanimous Aye.

Acting Mayor Rogers: One minute before we go, did anybody announce that Anita Romero is absent?

Mayor Diaz: No.

Acting Mayor Rogers: Because I am the person that I know that she is not well. I have to say it before we leave to close session so it's in the Minutes, that she's absent.

Councilor Flagg: Is she sick?

Mayor Diaz: Yeah.

Acting Mayor Rogers: I just wanted to do that to get it in.

COUNCIL IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Diaz: So we are back. I'd like to get a motion to adjourn the Executive Session and resume the Regular Agenda Meeting.

Councilor Flagg: So moved.

Vice Mayor Lopez: Second.

Mayor Diaz: All in favor signify by saying Aye.

Council Members: Unanimous Aye.

Mayor Diaz: So we are back in Regular Session.

**ITEM #09 - DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING ITEMS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION;
APPOINTMENT OF CITY ATTORNEY/CITY PROSECUTOR**

Mayor Diaz: What are the wishes of the Council?

Vice Mayor Lopez: Mr. Mayor.

Councilor Aguirre: I'd like to make a motion that we hire the law firm Pierce Coleman as outlined in the agreement that was negotiated by our City Manager and Staff over the last week or two, and that we hire them immediately per the outline on the agreement.

Vice Mayor Lopez: Second.

Mayor Diaz: Ok, a Motion and Second. Any more discussion?

Councilor Aguirre: I would just like to say before we make this vote, that if moving forward if we do hire this law firm, I am really looking forward to actually getting some things done with you all, with all my fellow Council Members, so thank you.

Mayor Diaz: You're welcome. Thank you. Any more discussion? So Councilor, we are going to call for a vote.

Mayor Diaz:

Councilor Valenzuela. Aye.

Councilor Aguirre. Aye.

Councilor Flagg. Aye.

Vice Mayor Lopez. Yes.

Acting Mayor Rita Rogers: Aye.

Mayor: I vote Aye. Motion passes.

Mayor Diaz: Of course, Item #10 is Adjournment.

Acting Mayor Rogers: So moved.

Vice Mayor Lopez: Second.

Mayor Diaz: Motion and Second. All in favor, signify by saying Aye.

Council Members: Unanimous Aye.

Mayor Diaz: Any opposed? Hearing none, we stand adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Mayor

ATTEST:

Veronica Moreno, City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Agenda Meeting of the City Council of South Tucson, Arizona, held on the 3rd day of January, 2023. I further certify the meeting was duly called and a quorum was present.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2023.

Veronica Moreno, City Clerk